X

THE GODLY FEAST

A few pages of this colloquy—merely the introductory material—appeared in the March, 1522, edition; the rest in a later edition of 1522. In the later edition the names of five speakers were changed: Adolphus, Balbus, Cornelius, Durandus, and Everardus became Eusebius, Timotheus, Theophilus, Chrysoglottus, and Uranius. They have not been identified (for some guesses, see Preserved Smith, *A Key to the Colloquies of Erasmus,* 1927, p. 11).

Although gardens and country houses were conventional settings for dialogues in Renaissance as in classical literature, the villa in "The Godly Feast," with its frescoes of Christian and pagan subjects, resembles somewhat an actual house known to Erasmus: that of his friend Johannes von Botzheim, Canon of Constance. Erasmus visited Botzheim in September, 1522, and in a letter written some months later described the house (*Erasmi Epistolae,* V, 212. 335-354). Possibly the enlarged text of this colloquy was composed after September; we do not know exactly when in 1522 the later edition appeared. Very likely there are also recollections here of the country house at Anderlecht, near Brussels, where Erasmus lived agreeably from May to November, 1521.

In its exegesis of Scripture, sentiments on the Christian life, and judgments of the virtuous ancients—a famous passage—this is a characteristic Erasmian dialogue.

EUSEBIUS, TIMOTHY, THEOPHILUS, CHRYSOGLOTTUS, URANIUS [SOPHRONIUS, EULALIUS, NEPHALIUS, THEODIDACTUS, SERVANT BOY]

Eusebius. Now that the whole countryside is fresh and smiling, I marvel at people who take pleasure in smoky cities.

Timothy. Some people don't enjoy the sight of flowers or verdant meadows or fountains or streams; or if they do, some-

thing else pleases them more. Thus pleasure succeeds pleasure, as nail drives out nail.

Eusebius. Maybe you're referring to moneylenders, or greedy merchants, who are just like them.

Timothy. Those, yes, but not those alone, my good friend. No, countless others besides them, including the very priests and monks themselves, who for the sake of gain usually prefer to live in cities—the most populous cities. They follow not Pythagorean or Platonic doctrine, but that of a certain blind beggar who rejoiced in the jostling of a crowd, because (he said) where there were people, there was his profit.

Eusebius. Away with the blind and their profit! We are philosophers.

Timothy. Also the philosopher Socrates [1] preferred cities to fields, because he was eager to learn, and cities afforded him means of learning. In the fields, to be sure, were trees and gardens, fountains and streams, that pleased the eye; but they had nothing to say, and therefore taught nothing.

Eusebius. Socrates wasn't altogether wrong, if you mean roaming in the fields by yourself. In my opinion, however, Nature is not silent but talks to us all the time, on every hand, and teaches the observant man many things if she finds him attentive and receptive. What else does the charming countenance of blooming Nature proclaim than that God the creator's wisdom is equal to his goodness? But how many things does Socrates teach his Phaedrus in that retreat, and how many learn from him in turn!

Timothy. If people of that sort were present, nothing could be more enjoyable than country life.

Eusebius. Then would you care to chance this? I've a little villa outside of town, a small but well-cultivated place, to which I invite you for lunch tomorrow.

Timothy. There are a good many of us. We'd eat you out of house and home.

Eusebius. Oh, no, you'll have a green feast made, as Hor-

1 *Phaedrus,* 230b-e.

ace [2] says, "from food not bought." The place itself supplies the wine; the very trees all but drop pumpkins, melons, figs, pears, apples, and nuts into your lap, as happens (if we believe Lucian) [3] in the Fortunate Isles. Perhaps we can have a hen from the coop.

Timothy. Well, we don't decline.

Eusebius. But let each one bring his shadow [4] along if he likes. Thus, since there are four of you, we'll equal the number of the Muses.

Timothy. We'll do it.

Eusebius. But I must warn you of one thing: everybody should bring his own seasoning with him. I'll furnish only the food.

Timothy. What seasoning do you mean, pepper or sugar?

Eusebius. No, something commoner but more agreeable.

Timothy. What?

Eusebius. An appetite. A light supper today will take care of that. Tomorrow a walk will sharpen it; and my little country place will furnish the walk, too. What hour do you like for lunch?

Timothy. About ten, before the heat's too great.

Eusebius. I'll arrange it.

Boy. Master, the guests are at the gate.

Eusebius. You're as good as your word about coming, but it's doubly gratifying that you've come early, along with your shadows, who are most welcome. For there are ill-bred guests who torment a host by being late.

Timothy. We came earlier in order to have time to walk round and see this palace of yours, which we hear is filled with various delights—not a corner that doesn't bear the master's stamp.

Eusebius. You'll see a palace worthy of such a king. To

[2] *Epodes,* ii, 48.

[3] In his *True History,* ii, 13-14.

[4] I.e., a companion.

me, certainly, it is a little nest dearer than any palace. And if he may be said to reign who lives exactly as he pleases, clearly I reign here. But it's best, I think, while the queen of the kitchen prepares a salad, and while the heat of the sun is still moderate, to visit my gardens.

Timothy. There's another besides this? For this admirably tended one immediately greets those entering it with the most delightful spectacle, and receives them cordially.

Eusebius. Then let everyone pick some blossoms and leaves from it, so the squalor of the house won't give offense. The same scent is not pleasing to everyone; therefore let each one of you choose for himself. Don't be sparing, for I allow whatever grows here to be almost public property. The door of this courtyard is never shut except at night.

Timothy. Look, here's Peter at the door.

Eusebius. I'd rather have him as porter than the Mercuries, Centaurs, and other monsters some people paint on their doors.

Timothy. This is more appropriate to a Christian.

Eusebius. My doorkeeper's no silent one, either. He greets the caller in three languages.

Timothy. What does he say?

Eusebius. Why not read it for yourself?

Timothy. It's a little too far away for me to make out plainly.

Eusebius. Here's a magnifying glass that will make you a Lynceus.

Timothy. I see the Latin: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Eusebius. Now read the Greek.

Timothy. I see the Greek all right, but it's Greek to me, so I'll hand the torch to Theophilus, who's always spouting Greek.

Theophilus. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted."

Chrysoglottus. I'll take the Hebrew: "The just shall live by his faith." [5]

[5] Matthew 19:17; Acts 3:19; Habakkuk 2:4.

Eusebius. Does he seem to you an uncivil porter, who at one and the same time warns us to avoid sin and turn to the pursuit of godliness; next, warns us that we do not attain to the true Christian life by works of the Mosaic law, but through gospel faith; finally, that the way to life eternal is by obeying the commandments of the Gospel?

Timothy. And look: the passage on the right shows us presently an exquisite little chapel. On the altar Jesus Christ gazes heavenward, whence his Father and the Holy Spirit look out, and he points to heaven with his right hand while with his left he seems to invite and allure the passerby.

Eusebius. Nor does he receive us in silence: you see in Latin and Greek, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"; in Greek, "I am Alpha and Omega"; and in Hebrew, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." [6]

Timothy. Truly the Lord Jesus has greeted us with glad tidings.

Eusebius. But lest we seem rude, perhaps we should return his greeting. Let us pray that since we can avail nothing of ourselves, he in his infinite goodness may never let us stray from the path of salvation; but, after we have rejected Jewish forms and the deceits of this world, may guide us through gospel truth to life eternal—that is, draw us to himself by himself.

Timothy. A quite reasonable proposal; and the very appearance of the place invites one to pray.

Eusebius. The charm of this garden entices many guests, but so strong is the force of custom that hardly any of them passes Jesus without greeting him. I've placed him here, instead of the filthy Priapus,[7] as protector not only of my garden but of everything I own; in short, of body and soul alike. Here, as you see, is a little fountain bubbling merrily with excellent water. It symbolizes in a manner that unique fountain

[6] John 14:6; Revelation 1:8; Psalms 34:11.

[7] A fertility god, protector of vineyards and gardens.

which refreshes with its heavenly stream all those who labor and are heavy laden, and for which the soul, wearied by the evils of this world, pants, as, according to the Psalmist, does the thirsty hart after tasting the flesh of serpents.[8] Whoever thirsts is welcome to drink of it. And some for religion's sake sprinkle themselves with the water. Some even drink, not because of thirst, but of religion.

I see you don't like to be torn away from this spot, but meantime the hour warns us to visit the more cultivated garden that the walls of my palace enclose in a square. If there's anything to be seen in the house, you'll view it after lunch, when the sun's heat will keep us at home like snails for some hours.

Timothy. Oh! I seem to behold Epicurean gardens.

Eusebius. This entire place is intended for pleasure—honest pleasure, that is: to feast the eyes, refresh the nostrils, restore the soul. Only fragrant herbs grow here, and those not just any herbs, but only choice ones. Each kind has its own beds.

Timothy. Your herbs here aren't speechless, either, so far as I can see.

Eusebius. Quite right. Other men have luxurious homes; I have one where there's a great deal of talk, that I may never seem lonely. You'll say so even more emphatically when you've seen the whole thing. As the herbs are gathered into companies, so to speak, so each company has its banner, with an inscription. For instance, the marjoram here says "Keep off, sow; I don't smell for you," because swine positively hate this odor, although it is the sweetest of scents. Each kind likewise has its own label indicating the special virtue of that herb.

Timothy. Thus far I've seen nothing more agreeable than this little fountain. Here in their midst it seems to smile on all the herbs, and promises to keep them cool in the heat. But this narrow channel which shows all the water so gracefully to

[8] Cf. Psalms 41:2. ". . . after tasting the flesh of serpents" is not in the received text of the psalm.

men's eyes, dividing the garden on either side in equal distances, and in which all its herbs are reflected as though in a mirror—is it made of marble?

Eusebius. Mind what you're saying! Where would marble come from? It's imitation marble made of cement, with a coating of white paint added.

Timothy. Where does such a pretty stream finally bury itself?

Eusebius. See how crude we are: after it has delighted our eyes here sufficiently, it drains the kitchen and carries that waste along to the sewer.

Timothy. That's callous, so help me!

Eusebius. Callous, unless God's goodness had made it for this use. We're callous, too, when we pollute with our sins and wicked lusts the fountain of Sacred Scripture—a far more pleasing fountain than this, given to refresh as well as cleanse our souls—and misuse so unspeakable a gift of God. We do not misuse this water if we employ it for the various purposes for which it was given by Him who provides abundantly for human needs.

Timothy. What you say is very true. But why are even your artificial hedges green?

Eusebius. In order that there might be nothing here that isn't green. Some people prefer red because that color enhances green things. I prefer this. Every man to his taste, even in gardens.

Timothy. The garden by itself is charming, but its beauty is almost overshadowed by the three galleries.

Eusebius. In these I study or stroll, conversing with myself or some close friend. Or, if the fancy strikes me, I have a meal here.

Timothy. Those evenly spaced pillars that support the building, so fascinating by their marvelous variety of colors—are *they* marble?

Eusebius. The same marble this channel is made of.

Timothy. An artistic deception indeed! I'd have sworn they were marble.

Eusebius. Let that be a warning to you not to believe or swear to anything rashly: appearances often deceive. We make up for lack of wealth by ingenuity.

[*They turn now to the frescoes on the walls of the galleries.*]

Timothy. Wasn't so neat and trim a garden good enough for you unless you painted other ones besides?

Eusebius. One garden wasn't enough to hold all kinds of plants. Moreover, we are twice pleased when we see a painted flower competing with a real one. In one we admire the cleverness of Nature, in the other the inventiveness of the painter; in each the goodness of God, who gives all these things for our use and is equally wonderful and kind in everything. Finally, a garden isn't always green, nor flowers always blooming. This garden grows and pleases even in midwinter.

Timothy. Yet it doesn't breathe.

Eusebius. But on the other hand it needs no attention.

Timothy. It pleases only the eyes.

Eusebius. True, but it does that forever.

Timothy. A picture, too, grows old.

Eusebius. Yes, but it's longer-lived than we are, and age commonly adds to it a grace we lose.

Timothy. I wish you were wrong about that!

Eusebius. In this gallery, which faces west, I enjoy the morning sun; in that one, which looks to the east, I sun myself sometimes; in the one which looks south but lies open to the north, I take refuge from the heat. Let's walk around, if you like, to get a better view. See, the very ground is green; the paving stones, too, are beautifully colored, and gladden one with painted flowers. This painted grove you observe, covering the entire wall, presents a varied spectacle. In the first place, you see as many varieties of trees as you do trees, each one represented with no little accuracy. You see as many species of birds as you do birds, especially those that are rather rare and renowned for one reason or another. (What use to paint geese, hens, and ducks?) Underneath are species of

quadrupeds, or of those birds that live on the ground like quadrupeds.

Timothy. A wonderful variety, and nothing inactive, nothing that's not doing or saying something. What does the owl, almost hidden under the branches, tell us?

Eusebius. An Attic owl, it speaks the Attic tongue: [9] "Be prudent: I don't fly for everyone." It bids us act advisedly, because unadvised rashness sometimes brings misfortune. Here an eagle rends a hare, a beetle protesting in vain. Beside the beetle stands a wren, the deadly enemy of the eagle.

Timothy. What does the swallow carry in its mouth?

Eusebius. Swallowwort, for by this she restores the sight of her blind fledglings. Do you recognize that plant?

Timothy. What new kind of lizard is this?

Eusebius. It's not a lizard but a chameleon.

Timothy. Is this the chameleon I've heard so much about? I thought it was a bigger beast than a lion, whom it surpasses even in name.

Eusebius. This chameleon here is always openmouthed, always hungry. Here's a wild fig tree. Only when near it is he fierce; at other times he's harmless. But he does have poison; don't scorn a gaping creature so small.

Timothy. But he isn't changing his color.

Eusebius. True, because he isn't changing his place; when he changes his place you'll see a different color.

Timothy. What's the piper doing here?

Eusebius. Don't you see the camel dancing nearby?

Timothy. I see a strange sight: a wanton camel, and a monkey for his piper.

Eusebius. But there'll be opportunity to examine these sights one by one at your leisure some other time, or for three days together. Enough now to have seen them as if through a

[9] Because sacred to Pallas Athene. Most of the numerous proverbs and many of the allusions to natural history in this colloquy Erasmus explicates in his *Adagia,* a collection of aphorisms with comments or essays. First published in 1500 and often reprinted, it was an extremely popular book throughout the sixteenth century.

lattice. Over here is every kind of famous plant accurately painted, and (what you may well wonder at), however instantly poisonous they are, here they may not only be viewed safely but even touched.

Timothy. Here's a scorpion, a rare pest in these parts but common in Italy. Though to me his color in the picture doesn't seem convincing.

Eusebius. How so?

Timothy. Because the Italian ones are darker: this one's rather light.

Eusebius. But don't you recognize the plant he's fallen on?

Timothy. Not well enough.

Eusebius. No wonder, for it doesn't grow in our gardens. It's wolfsbane, so poisonous that when a scorpion comes in contact with it he's stunned, turns pale, and surrenders. But, injured by a poison, he seeks a remedy in poison. You see nearby every variety of hellebore. If the scorpion can get free of the wolfsbane leaf and touch the white hellebore, he'll recover his old strength; the touch of a different poison cures his numbness.

Timothy. Then this scorpion's done for, because he'll never free himself from the wolfsbane leaf.—Do even scorpions talk here?

Eusebius. Yes, and in Greek, too.

Timothy. What does he say?

Eusebius. "God hath found out the guilty." Here beside the herbs you see every kind of serpent. Look, a basilisk, dreadful with his fiery eyes and extremely dangerous poisons.

Timothy. He, too, is saying something.

Eusebius. "Let them hate, so long as they fear."

Timothy. A royal saying, clearly.

Eusebius. No, nothing is less royal; the saying of a tyrant, rather. Here a lizard fights with an adder. Here a dipsas lurks, hidden by the shell of an ostrich egg. Here you see a whole republic of ants, whom the Hebrew sage [10] urges us to imitate;

10 Proverbs 6:6.

and so does our Horace,[11] too. Here you see Indian ants, which carry gold and hoard it.

Timothy. Good heavens, who could possibly get bored in this changing scene?

Eusebius. At some other time, I say, you may look at it until you're tired. For the present, just observe the third wall from a distance. It has lakes, rivers, and seas, containing every kind of famous fish. Here's the Nile, in which you see the dolphin, who loves men, fighting with a crocodile, than whom man has no deadlier enemy. On the banks you see amphibians, such as crabs, seals, a beaver. Here's a polypus, a captor captured by an oyster.

Timothy. What's the inscription? "The captor captive." The painter has made the water wonderfully clear.

Eusebius. He had to, or we should have needed other eyes. Next is another polypus, sailing merrily along the surface like a yacht. You see a torpedo lying on sand of the same color; here you can touch it safely with your hand. But we must hurry on to another place. These sights feast the eyes but don't fill the belly. Let's get on to the rest.

Timothy. Still more?

Eusebius. You'll soon see what the back door has to show us. Here you see an ample garden, divided into two parts. In one are herbs for the table; my wife and maidservant rule here. In the other are all sorts of medicinal herbs, especially the rare ones. To the left is an open meadow with nothing but green grass, and enclosed by a continuous hedge of hawthorn. There I stroll sometimes or entertain myself with company. To the right is an orchard in which, at your leisure, you'll see many exotic trees. These I'm gradually training to accustom themselves to our climate.

Timothy. Well! You outdo Alcinous[12] himself.

Eusebius. Here at the end, joining the upper gallery, which you'll see after lunch, is an aviary. You'll see different

[11] *Sat.*, I, i, 32-35.

[12] *Odyssey*, vi-vii.

shapes and hear different tongues. No less different are the birds' natures: among some, kinship and mutual affection; among others, irreconcilable enmity. Yet they're all so tame that when the window there is opened at dinner, they fly down to the table and take food from your hands. Whenever I approach on the little arched bridge you see, talking with a friend, they sit nearby and listen, perching on my arms or shoulders, so fearless are they, because they know nobody harms them. At the far end of the orchard is the kingdom of the bees; no unattractive sight, either. I won't let you look any more just now; I want you to have something to bring you back, as though to a new spectacle. After lunch I'll show you the rest.

Boy. Your wife and the maid insist lunch is getting spoiled.

Eusebius. Tell them to be calm, we're coming right away. Let's wash, gentlemen, that we may approach the table with hands and hearts both clean. For truly if a meal was a holy thing to pagans, much more should it be so to Christians, for whom it's an allegory of that sacred last supper which the Lord Jesus had with his disciples. Hence the custom of washing the hands, in order that if perchance any hatred, envy, or shamefulness dwell in one's mind, he may get rid of it before coming to eat. And indeed I believe food is better for the body if eaten with a pure mind.

Timothy. We heartily agree.

Eusebius. Since Christ himself set the example of hallowing the food by a hymn—for I believe we often read in the Gospel that he blessed food or gave thanks to his Father before breaking bread—and again of ending with a hymn, I'll recite, if you like, a hymn that St. Chrysostom praises very highly in one of his homilies and even thought worthy of a commentary.[13]

Timothy. We beg you to do so.

Eusebius. "Blessed be thou, O God, who hast nourished

13 *Homilies on Matthew,* 55. Erasmus edited and translated some of Chrysostom's works.

me from my youth up, who providest food for every creature. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that having abundance we may abound to every good work. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be glory, honor, and dominion forever."

Timothy. Amen.

Eusebius. Now sit down, every one with his shadow. Timothy, your gray hairs entitle you to be at the head of the table.

Timothy. You've expressed my whole merit in a word. On this score alone am I to be preferred before the others.

Eusebius. God is the judge of other gifts; we go by what we see. Sophronius, stay where you are. Theophilus and Eulalius, sit at the right of the table. Chrysoglottus and Theodidactus will take the left, Uranius and Nephalius the other places. I'll guard this corner.

Timothy. We won't allow that. The host should be at the head of the table.

Eusebius. What's mine here is yours too, but if I may have authority in my own realm, I decree that the host is to have whichever place he chooses. Now may Christ, who makes all men to rejoice, and without whom nothing is truly pleasing, deign to attend our feast and rejoice our hearts by his presence.

Timothy. I hope he will deign to do so. But since every place is filled, where will he sit?

Eusebius. May he mingle with all our food and drink, so that everything taste of him, but most of all may he penetrate our minds! That he may please to come, and we make ourselves the readier for so great a guest, you shall hear (if you don't object) a short passage from Sacred Scripture, but in such fashion that this won't interfere with your eating eggs and lettuce if you like.

Timothy. We'll eat with pleasure, but listen with even more pleasure.

Eusebius. This custom, it seems to me, has much to recommend it, because by means of it we avoid foolish yarns and en-

joy profitable conversation.[14] I disagree emphatically with those who think a dinner party isn't fun unless it overflows with silly, bawdy stories and rings with dirty songs. True gaiety comes from a clean, sincere conscience. And truly enjoyable conversations are those which are always pleasant to have held or heard, and always delightful to recall, not those which soon cause one to be ashamed and conscience-stricken.

Timothy. Would that we all weighed these words as much as their truth deserves!

Eusebius. Besides being certain, and eminently useful, they're pleasant when you've been accustomed to them for a month.

Timothy. Nothing is more advisable, therefore, than to habituate ourselves to excellence.

Eusebius. Read clearly and distinctly, boy.

Boy. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." [15]

Eusebius. That will do. For it's more profitable to learn a few things eagerly than to swallow many in boredom.

Timothy. Very true, but not of this book only. Pliny [16] writes that Cicero's *De Officiis* should never be out of one's hands, and in my opinion it certainly deserves the closest study by everyone, especially by those destined for careers in government. But this little book of Proverbs I've always considered worthy of being carried with us at all times.

Eusebius. I've provided it as seasoning, since I knew the lunch would be thin and insipid.

Timothy. Really, it's all very delightful; and yet if we

14 Erasmus records elsewhere that Dean Colet had a passage from Proverbs or Paul's epistles read at supper, and then discussed by the guests (*Erasmi Epistolae,* IV, 516. 312-318).

15 Proverbs 21:1-3.

16 *Natural History,* preface, xxii-xxiii.

had nothing but beets without pepper, wine, and vinegar, such a reading would season everything.

Eusebius. Nevertheless I should be better pleased if I understood thoroughly what I heard. I wish we had here a good theologian who not only understood these matters but had taste as well. I don't know whether it's permissible for us laymen to discuss these topics.

Timothy. Permissible even for sailors, in my opinion, provided they're cautious about passing judgment. And perhaps Christ, who promised to be present wherever two men gathered in his name, will help us, since we are so many.

Eusebius. Then suppose we divide the three verses among us nine?

Guests. Good. Only let the host begin.

Eusebius. I wouldn't decline my appointment, but I'm afraid the fare I provide may be even worse than the food I serve you. All right; I don't want to be a disagreeable host. Putting aside the various conjectures of the commentators on this passage, I think its moral sense is this. Other mortals can be swayed by warnings, scoldings, laws, and threats; the king's heart, if you oppose it, is annoyed rather, since it *fears* nobody. And therefore, whenever princes have their minds set on anything they should be left to their whims, not because they always desire what is best, but because God sometimes uses their madness or wickedness to correct sinners, as he forbade resistance to Nebuchadnezzar because he had decided to chastise his people through the agency of this king.[17] Perhaps that is what Job means: "Who maketh the hypocrite reign for the sins of the people." [18] And maybe what David says, lamenting his sin, applies here: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." [19] Not that kings don't commit sin, to the great injury of their subjects, but no man has authority to condemn kings; whereas no one, be he ever so mighty, can escape God's judgment.

17 Jeremiah 27.
18 Job 34:30 (Vulgate).
19 Psalms 51:4.

Timothy. Your interpretation does not displease me. But what does "the rivers of water" mean?

Eusebius. There's a comparison at hand to explain it. A king's mind, when aroused, is violent and unrestrained; it cannot be led this way or that but is driven by its own force, as if excited by a divine frenzy, just as the sea spreads itself over the land and frequently changes course, heedless of fields, buildings, and whatever else stands in its way; in some places it goes underground. If you tried to stop its force or divert it, you could do nothing. The same with large rivers: witness stories about Achelous.[20] But you suffer less if you go along with the stream than if you resist violently.

Timothy. Then is there no remedy against the unbridled fury of wicked kings?

Eusebius. The first, perhaps, will be not to receive the lion into the city. Next, by authority of senate, magistrates, and people, to limit his power in such a way that he may not easily break out into tyranny. But the best safeguard of all is to shape his character by sacred teachings while he's still a boy and doesn't realize he's a ruler. Petitions and admonitions help, provided they are polite and temperate. Your last resource is to beseech God to incline the king's heart to conduct worthy of a Christian prince.

Timothy. What do you mean, "layman"? Were I a Bachelor of Theology, I'd be very little ashamed of this interpretation.

Eusebius. Whether it's correct, I don't know; I'm satisfied that the idea isn't irreverent or heretical. I've carried out your request. Now, as is proper at parties, it's my turn to hear you.

Timothy. I think—if you make allowance for these gray hairs—that this saying can be accommodated to a deeper meaning.

Eusebius. So do I, and I want to hear it.

Timothy. "King" can be understood as the perfect man who, with his bodily passions under control, is governed solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, to compel such a

20 Ovid, *Met.*, viii, 549—ix, 100.

man to conform to human laws is perhaps unsuitable. Instead he should be left to his Master, by whose spirit he is led; he is not to be judged by those conditions through which the weak and simple are somehow drawn to true godliness. But if he does anything unrighteously, we ought to say with Paul, "God hath received him," "To his own master he standeth or falleth." [21] Likewise: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." [22] Therefore nobody may prescribe to such men, but the Lord who set the bounds to sea and rivers has the heart of the king in his hand and directs it whithersoever he wills. For what need is there to prescribe for one who voluntarily exceeds the demands of human laws? Or what foolhardiness would it be to bind by human regulations the man who (as is evident by certain signs) is governed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? [23]

Eusebius. Truly, Timothy, you're venerable not in years only but in pure learning as well. And would that among Christians, all of whom should be kings, more such men might be found worthy of kingship!

But we've had enough of eggs and greens to start with. Have these removed and the other things served.

Timothy. I'm well satisfied with this "ovation" even if there's nothing else, either festival or triumph, to follow.

Eusebius. Yes, but since, by Christ's help as I believe, explication of the first sentence has been successful, I'd like your shadow to explain the second one, which seems to me somewhat more obscure.

Sophronius. If you'll take in good part whatever I say, I'll try my best to tell you how the matter looks to me. How else could a shadow shed light on darkness?

Eusebius. Well, on behalf of the company I accept the condition; and such shadows have their own light, one more suitable to our eyes.

[21] Romans 14:3-4.

[22] I Corinthians 2:15.

[23] This passage was censured by the Sorbonne (*Opera Omnia,* Leiden edition, IX, 934D–935B).

Sophronius. This doctrine seems the same as that of Paul, that piety is sought after by various modes of life. Some find the priesthood to their liking, some celibacy, some marriage, some retirement, some public affairs, according to their different constitutions and temperaments. Again, one man eats anything he likes; another discriminates between foods; another, between days; to another, every day is the same. In these matters Paul wants everyone to enjoy his own preference without reproach from anybody else. No man should judge in questions of this sort, but leave judgment to God, who pondereth the hearts. For it often happens that he who eats is more acceptable to God than he who does not; and he who profanes a holy day than he who seems to keep it; and this man's marriage is more acceptable in the sight of God than the celibacy of many others. I the shadow have had my say.

Eusebius. I hope it may often fall to my lot to talk with such shadows! Unless I'm mistaken, you've touched the spot, not, as they say, with the needle but with the tongue.—But here's one who's long lived celibate, yet is not of the company of the blessed who "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." [24] This creature was forcibly castrated to please the belly more, until "God shall destroy both it and meats." [25] It's a capon from my own coop. I'm fond of boiled dishes. The soup isn't bad; the lettuce swimming in it is very choice. Everybody help himself as he likes. But I don't wish to deceive you: we'll have a roast after this, then dessert, and finally the end of the story.

Timothy. But meantime we exclude your wife from the feast.

Eusebius. When you bring yours along, mine will sit down with us too. What would she be now but a mute? As a woman, she prefers to gossip with women; and we philosophize more freely. Otherwise we might run the risk of meeting with the same accident as befell Socrates. When he was entertaining philosophers—who would rather talk like this than eat—and

[24] Matthew 19:12.

[25] I Corinthians 6:13.

the argument went on and on, Xanthippe in a fit of anger upset the table.

Timothy. I'm sure there's nothing we need fear less from your wife, since she's a woman of very placid temper.

Eusebius. So much so to me, certainly, that I wouldn't exchange her if I could; and in this respect I account myself fortunate indeed. For I don't agree with those who think a man lucky not to have had a wife. I like rather the Hebrew sage's saying that "He that hath a good wife hath a good lot." [26]

Timothy. Often it's our own fault that our wives are bad, either because we choose bad ones, or make them such, or don't train and control them as we should.

Eusebius. Right. But meanwhile I'm waiting for an interpretation of the third sentence, and the inspired Theophilus, I think, is now ready to speak.

Theophilus. No, my mind was on my dishes. Nevertheless I'll speak, since I may do so safely.

Eusebius. You'll please us even by making a mistake, for thus you'll give us an opportunity of finding the right answer.

Theophilus. The idea seems to me the same as that which the Lord revealed through the prophet Hosea, Chapter 6: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"; a passage whose living and effectual interpreter is the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 9. For when he would dine in the house of Levi the publican, who had invited many of his own class and occupation, the Pharisees—who vaunted themselves as strict keepers of the law, although they disregarded those commandments on which all the law and the prophets hung—in order to turn the minds of his disciples away from Jesus, asked them why their master ate with sinners, from whose company Jews abstained if they wanted to be considered especially holy; and if they chanced to meet such a person, took a bath as soon as they returned home. And since the disciples, still inexperienced, were at a loss to reply, the Lord answered for them as

26 Proverbs 18:22 (Vulgate).

well as for himself: "They that be whole," he said, "need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." [27]

Eusebius. You explain the matter very well by comparing passages, an excellent method of biblical study. But I should like to learn what "sacrifice" and "mercy" mean. For how can God's rejection of sacrifices agree with his having commanded so often that they be made to him?

Theophilus. God himself teaches us in Isaiah 1 in what manner he rejects sacrifices. Jewish law enjoins some things that are expressions rather than proofs of holiness: such things as holy days, sabbaths, fasts, sacrifices. And there are some things always to be observed, things good not because they are commanded, but good *per se.* But God rejects the Jews, not because they would keep the rites of the law but because, foolishly puffed up by keeping them, they would neglect what God especially requires of us. Saturated with greed, pride, theft, hatred, envy, and other sins, they thought God much in their debt because they frequented the temple on holy days, offered burnt sacrifices, abstained from forbidden foods, and fasted occasionally. They embraced the shadows and neglected the substance. As for "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," I suppose this is Hebrew idiom for "I desire mercy *more than* sacrifice"; as Solomon means when he says, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." [28] Moreover, every act of kindness done to help our neighbor the Scripture calls mercy and pity (the word "pity" is derived from "having mercy"). I think "sacrifice" means whatever pertains to corporeal rites and has some connection with Judaism, such as choice of foods, prescribed dress, fasting, sacrifice, perfunctory prayers, inactivity on holy days. Though not to be omitted entirely in certain seasons, these become displeasing to God if a person relies on such observances but neglects works of mercy when a brother's need calls for charity. To

27 Matthew 9:12-13.

28 Proverbs 21:3.

shun even the conversation of the wicked gives an appearance of holiness, but this should end as often as charity to a neighbor requires otherwise. To rest on holy days is obedience, but to let a brother perish on account of your religious observance of a day would be impious. Likewise I should say keeping the Sabbath is a sacrifice; to be reconciled with your brother, an act of mercy. Furthermore, although "judgment" can refer to rulers, who often oppress the weak by force, nevertheless I think it quite possibly agrees with what is said in Hosea: "And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." One does not keep the law unless he keeps it in accordance with God's purpose. The Jews rescued an ass if it fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, yet they reviled Christ for healing a man on the Sabbath. This was a preposterous judgment, and far from an understanding of God, for they did not realize that these institutions were made for man, not man for them.

But I might seem to say these things immodestly unless I said them by your command. I'd rather learn something more accurate from the others.

Eusebius. That was said so "immodestly" that for my part I could believe the Lord Jesus spoke through your mouth. But while we feast our minds plenteously, let not their partners be neglected.

Theophilus. Who are they?

Eusebius. Our bodies; aren't they partners of our minds? For I prefer "partners" to "instruments" or "dwellings" or "tombs."

Timothy. When the whole man is refreshed, this is abundant refreshment indeed.

Eusebius. I see you're slow to help yourselves, so with your permission I'll have the roast served, for fear I should give you a long feast instead of a luscious one. You behold the main course of our little luncheon: a small but excellent shoulder of mutton, a capon, and four partridges. These alone I bought at market; my little estate here supplied the rest.

Timothy. I behold an Epicurean, nay a Sybaritic, luncheon.

Eusebius. Oh, no, scarcely Carmelitic. But take it in good part, such as it is. My intentions are good even if the feast isn't sumptuous.

Timothy. So far from silent is your house that not only the walls but the cup too says something.

Eusebius. What does it tell you?

Timothy. "No one is harmed but by himself."

Eusebius. The cup speaks in defense of wine, for most people blame the wine when they get a fever or headache from drinking, although they themselves have invited the trouble by drinking too much.

Sophronius. Mine speaks Greek: "In wine there's truth."

Eusebius. A warning that it's not safe for priests or servants of kings to be fond of wine, because wine commonly brings to the tip of a man's tongue whatever he was hiding in his heart.

Sophronius. Among the Egyptians, priests were forbidden to drink wine, even though men were not yet in the habit of committing secrets to them.

Eusebius. Everyone's allowed to drink wine nowadays. Whether or not this is wise, I don't know. Eulalius, what's that little book you are taking from your pocket? It looks very fine, for even on the outside it's all gilded.

Eulalius. But it's more than precious on the inside. These are Paul's letters, which I always carry with me as my favorite delights. I take them out now because your remark reminded me of a certain passage that has puzzled me a good long while, nor have I made up my mind about it even yet. It's in I Corinthians, 6: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." In the first place, if we believe the Stoics, nothing is useful unless likewise honorable. How, then, does Paul distinguish the lawful from the expedient? Surely whoring or drunkenness is not lawful; therefore how are "all things" lawful? But if Paul is talking about a particular class of things, all of which he would allow, I can't well conjecture from the tone of *this* passage what that class

might be. What immediately follows suggests that he is talking about the choice of foods. For some persons abstained from meat offered to idols, some from foods forbidden by Moses. And of meats offered to idols he treats in Chapter 8 and again in Chapter 10. As though to explain the meaning of this passage,[29] he says: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat." [30] What Paul subjoins here seems to agree with what he had said above: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them." [31] That here too he had in mind the Jewish choice of foods is indicated by the close of Chapter 10: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." "Gentiles" seems to be connected with meat offered to idols; "Jews" with the choice of foods; "the Church of God" with the weak of both races. It was permissible, therefore, to eat anything one liked, and "to the pure all things are pure." But this may be inexpedient. That all things were permissible was a matter of gospel liberty; but charity everywhere regards what contributes to the salvation of our neighbor, and on that account frequently abstains from what is permitted, preferring to yield to the welfare of a neighbor rather than exercise its liberty.[32]

But here a double objection bothers me. First, in the context of the discourse nothing that precedes or follows fits this sense. For he rebukes the Corinthians for being unruly and impure by reason of whoring, adultery, and even incest, and

[29] I.e., the one in Ch. 6.

[30] I Corinthians 10:23-25.

[31] I Corinthians 6:13.

[32] The Sorbonne condemned the last part of this paragraph (*Opera Omnia,* Leiden edition, IX, 935B-D).

for going to law "before the unjust." [33] How does "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" agree with these words? And in what follows he returns to the cause of their shamelessness (he had resumed this earlier, also), dropping the subject of lawsuits. "The body," he says, "is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." [34] Yet this objection I can manage to overcome, too, because a little earlier in his list of sins he had mentioned idolatry: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers. . . ." [35] Moreover, the eating of meats offered to idols bordered on idolatry. And therefore he adds immediately: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats," [36] signifying that for the body's needs one may, for the time being, eat anything he likes unless deterred by compassion for his neighbor. But shamelessness is to be abhorred always and everywhere. Eating is necessary, but the necessity will be taken away at the resurrection of the dead; lusting is wickedness.

But a second difficulty I can't solve: how "But I will not be brought under the power of any" [37] agrees with this passage. For he says he has all things in his power, yet will not be brought under the power of any. If one who abstains lest he give offense is said to be in the power of another, that's just what he says of himself in Chapter 9: "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain all." [38] St. Ambrose,[39] evidently troubled by this difficulty, thinks rather that the Apostle here prepares the way for what in Chapter 9 he says he has the *power* of doing, and what others, either apostles or false apostles, *were* doing—i.e., getting his livelihood from those to whom he preached the gospel.

[33] I Corinthians 6:1.
[34] I Corinthians 6:13.
[35] I Corinthians 6:9.
[36] I Corinthians 6:13.
[37] I Corinthians 6:12.
[38] I Corinthians 9:19. "Gain all" should be "gain the more."
[39] "Commentary on I Corinthians," in Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* XVII, 225C-D.

But although he had a right to do this, he held back, in order to make matters easier for the Corinthians, whom he was rebuking for so many and such egregious sins. Furthermore, whoever accepts anything comes more or less under obligation to the one from whom he accepts it, and loses some of his authority, since he is less free to criticize, and usually the giver won't tolerate criticism by the beneficiary. In this respect, therefore, Paul refrained from what was permissible, to preserve his Apostolic freedom; he wanted to avoid giving offense on this ground, in order that he might denounce their sins more freely and with greater authority. To me Ambrose's notion is not unattractive. If one prefers, nevertheless, to apply this passage to foods, my view is that Paul's "But I will not be brought under the power of any" can be understood thus: "Although, for the sake of my neighbor's salvation and the advancement of the gospel, I abstain sometimes from foods used in sacrifices, or forbidden by the Mosaic law, yet my mind is free, knowing I may eat whatever I please to suit my mere body's needs." But false apostles argued that some foods were unclean in themselves, not to be shunned only on occasion but always, as though they were naturally harmful, just as we refrain from murder and adultery. Those who believed this were "brought under the power" of another, and cut off from the freedom of the gospel. Only Theophylact,[40] as I recall, dissents from all these interpretations: "It is permissible to eat any foods whatever, but not intemperately, for excess produces shamelessness." Although this is sound sense, still it does not seem to me the real meaning of the passage.

I've shown you what perplexes me. It will be left to your kindness to get me out of my difficulties.

Eusebius. Indeed you answer to your name very well. One who can put questions thus doesn't need someone else to answer them. You've expressed your doubt in such a way that I myself am in doubt no longer, even though Paul, since he decided to deal with many matters at the same time, often

40 "Commentary on I Corinthians," in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca,* CXXIV, 633A-B.

shifts in this letter from one subject to another, and then resumes what he had interrupted.

Chrysoglottus. If I weren't afraid my chatter would interfere with your eating, and if I thought it lawful to mix anything from profane writers with such religious conversation, I'd present something that didn't puzzle but delighted me extremely as I was reading it today.

Eusebius. On the contrary, whatever is devout and contributes to good morals should not be called profane. Of course Sacred Scripture is the basic authority in everything; yet I sometimes run across ancient sayings or pagan writings—even the poets'—so purely and reverently expressed, and so inspired, that I can't help believing their authors' hearts were moved by some divine power. And perhaps the spirit of Christ is more widespread than we understand, and the company of saints includes many not in our calendar. Speaking frankly among friends, I can't read Cicero's *De senectute, De amicitia, De officiis, De Tusculanis quaestionibus* without sometimes kissing the book and blessing that pure heart, divinely inspired as it was. But when, on the other hand, I read these modern writers on government, economics, or ethics—good Lord, how tame they are by comparison! And what lack of feeling they seem to have for what they write! So that I would much rather let all of Scotus and others of his sort perish, than the books of a single Cicero or Plutarch. Not that I condemn the former entirely, but I perceive I am helped by reading the others, whereas I rise from the reading of these somehow less enthusiastic about true virtue, but more disputatious. So don't hesitate to present it, whatever it is.

Chrysoglottus. While most of Tully's books on philosophy seem to breathe something of divinity, I consider the one on old age, written when he himself was old, his swan song, as the Greek proverb puts it. Today I reread it, and learned the following words by heart, since they pleased me most of all: "But if some god granted me power to change my old age and be a child again and cry in the cradle, I should steadfastly refuse; nor, after finishing the course, as it were, should I

like to be called back to the starting point. For what satisfaction does this life have? Rather, what hardship does it not have? But should it not have that for certain, undeniably it has wearisomeness and vexation. I do not wish to complain of life, as many men, and learned ones too, have often done. Nor am I sorry to have lived, since I have so lived that I do not think I was born in vain. And yet I depart from this life as from an inn, not a home. Nature gave us a lodging to stop at, not to settle down in. O glorious day when I shall join that company of souls and leave this tumult and contagion!" [41] Thus far Cato. What could a Christian have said more reverently? I wish the conversations of monks, or those of monks and nuns, were all like this talk of an old pagan with young pagans.

Eusebius. But someone will object that Cicero's discourse is a fiction.

Chrysoglottus. To me it matters little whether the credit belongs to Cato for thinking and uttering such sentiments, or to Cicero, whose mind by the power of imagination laid hold upon such divine ideas, and whose pen described these choice themes with corresponding eloquence. Though I believe that even if he didn't utter those very words, Cato nevertheless was in the habit of saying things like them in conversation. Tully was not so impudent as to depict Cato as other than he really was, nor, in his dialogue, to overlook decorum—an essential requirement in this kind of composition, especially when remembrance of that man was fresh in the minds of the writer's contemporaries.

Theophilus. Very likely, but I'll tell you what came to mind while you were reciting. I've often wondered at the fact that although everybody hopes for a long life and dreads death, I've found scarcely anyone—I don't mean a very aged man but one beginning to get along in years—who was so happy that he wouldn't agree with Cato if asked whether he would be a child again if he could, experiencing all the good and evil that had already fallen to his lot in life; especially if

41 *De senectute,* xxiii, 83-84.

he called to mind whatever had happened to him for better or worse. Recollection of pleasant things is often accompanied by shame or a bad conscience, so that the mind shrinks from recalling them no less than it shrinks from recalling sorrows. The wisest poets have pointed this out to us, I believe. According to them, it is only after souls have drunk large draughts of forgetfulness from the river Lethe that they are at last enthralled by desire for the bodies they left behind.

Uranius. This is curious, to be sure, and I've often observed examples of it myself. Yet what pleased me rather was "Nor am I sorry to have lived." Now, how many Christians live soberly enough to be able to apply this old man's statements to themselves? Most think they have not lived in vain if, at death, they can leave a large estate got by hook or crook. But Cato's reason for thinking he had not lived in vain was that he had been an honest, upright citizen of the republic and an incorruptible magistrate, and that he left to posterity monuments of his virtue and industry. What could be said more divinely than his "I depart as from an inn, not from a home"? One may use an inn for a while, until the host tells him to go. From his own home one is not easily driven out. And yet it often happens that a collapse or a fire or some other accident forces him out; or even if none of these should occur, the building's crumbling with age warns him to move.

Nephalius. No less choice is the speech of Socrates in Plato: "The human soul is placed in this body as if in a garrison which it must not abandon except by the commander's order, or remain in longer than suits him who stationed it there."[42] The more significant that Plato said "garrison" instead of "house," since we only inhabit a house; in a garrison we are assigned some duty by our commander. Nor is this out of keeping with our Scriptures, which tell us human life is sometimes a warfare, sometimes a battle.

Uranius. Cato's language, I think, agrees admirably with that of Paul,[43] who, writing to the Corinthians, calls the

42 Cf. *Phaedo,* 62b.

43 II Corinthians 5:1-2.

heavenly mansion we look for after this life οἰκία and οἰκητήριον, that is, a home or dwelling. But this poor body he calls a tabernacle, Greek σκῆνος. "For we that are in this tabernacle," he says, "do groan, being burdened." [44]

Nephalius. Neither is it out of keeping with the language of Peter: "I think it meet," he says, "as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." [45] What else does Christ proclaim to us than that we should live and watch as though we were shortly to die, to exert ourselves in good deeds as though we were to live forever? When we hear that "O glorious day" don't we seem to hear Paul himself saying, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ"? [46]

Chrysoglottus. How fortunate are they who await death in such a spirit! But in Cato's speech, splendid though it is, one might object to the self-confidence as expressive of an arrogance that ought to be very far from a Christian. Hence I think I've never read anything in pagan writers more proper to a true Christian than what Socrates spoke to Crito [47] shortly before drinking the hemlock: "Whether God will approve of my works," he said, "I know not; certainly I have tried hard to please him. Yet I have good hope that he will accept my efforts." Diffident as he was about his own deeds, yet by reason of his earnest desire to obey the divine will he conceived a strong hope that God in his goodness would accept them, because he had endeavored to live righteously.

Nephalius. An admirable spirit, surely, in one who had not known Christ and the Sacred Scriptures. And so, when I read such things of such men, I can hardly help exclaiming, "Saint Socrates, pray for us!"

Chrysoglottus. As for me, there are many times when I do not hesitate to hope confidently that the souls of Virgil and Horace are sanctified.

[44] II Corinthians 5:4.
[45] II Peter 1:13-14.
[46] Philippians 1:23.
[47] To Simmias and Cebes, rather: *Phaedo,* 69d.

Nephalius. Yet how many Christians have I seen die ever so bitterly! Some put their trust in what should not be trusted; some, because of bad conscience about their sins, and because of stumbling blocks that certain ignorant persons place in the way of the dying, expire in almost hopeless despair.[48]

Chrysoglottus. No wonder those who have puzzled their heads so much over ceremonies all their lives should die thus.[49]

Nephalius. What do you mean by that word "ceremonies"?

Chrysoglottus. I'll tell you, but let me begin by making very plain that I don't condemn the rites and sacraments of the Church; on the contrary I most emphatically approve of them. I do condemn certain unprincipled or superstitious or (to put it as mildly as I can) simple and uninformed men who teach the people to put their trust in these things, when those that make us truly Christians are neglected.

Nephalius. I don't follow you very well.

Chrysoglottus. I'll try to make it clear. If you look at the majority of Christians, isn't it true that their main reliance in life is in ceremonies? How scrupulously are the ancient rites of the Church performed in baptism! The infant waits outside the church door; exorcism and catechism are carried out; vows taken; Satan abjured with all his pomps and vanities; finally the babe is anointed with oil, marked with the sign of the cross, salted, and dipped; sponsors are given the charge of training the child; upon payment of a sum of money they are released. And now at last the boy is called a Christian—and is one after a fashion. Soon he is anointed again; finally he learns to confess; takes Communion; becomes accustomed to keeping quiet on holy days, to hearing divine service, to fasting at times, to abstaining from meat. And if he does these things, he is considered a Christian beyond question. He marries, and receives another sacrament. He takes orders, and is once more

48 See the colloquy "The Funeral."

49 This remark and the one a few lines later, "their main reliance in life is in ceremonies," offended the Sorbonne (*Opera Omnia,* Leiden edition, IX, 935D-936C).

anointed and consecrated; his clothes are changed; prayers said. All this I approve of, but their doing it from custom rather than from conviction I don't approve of. The notion that nothing else is needed for Christianity I reject absolutely, since a great part of mankind, while trusting to these things, loses no time in making money by hook or crook and becoming enslaved to anger, lust, gluttony, ambition until at last they come to death's door. Here again ceremonies are ready. Confession is made over and over; extreme unction added; the Eucharist administered; sacred candles, a crucifix, holy water are at hand; indulgences produced; a papal brief displayed or bought on the spot for the dying man; a lavish funeral ordered; once again a solemn contract is made; one man shouts in the dying person's ear—sometimes, in fact, pesters him to an earlier death if (as frequently happens) he's loud or well liquored. Although these ceremonies, especially the ones sanctioned by ecclesiastical usage, are acceptable, yet there are also other, more interior, means of helping us to depart from this life with cheerfulness and Christian trust.

Eusebius. You preach piously and truly, to be sure, but meanwhile nobody touches the food. Let no one deceive himself: I told you beforehand to expect nothing beyond a second course, and that a country one, lest anyone promise himself pheasants or woodcocks or Attic delicacies. Remove these things, boy, and serve the rest. You see my horn of penury, not plenty. This is the produce of the little gardens you saw. Don't hold back if there's something you like.

Timothy. There's such variety that the very sight of it refreshes us.

Eusebius. But—that you may not altogether scorn my frugality—this dish would have overjoyed that good Christian monk Hilarion and a hundred of his companions among the monks of that age. For Paul and Anthony, indeed, it would have been a month's provision.[50]

[50] Hilarion, Paul, Anthony: famous early Christian hermits. Anthony was the reputed founder of monasticism.

Timothy. Nor would Peter, Prince of Apostles, have despised it, I believe, when he dwelt with Simon the tanner.[51]

Eusebius. Nor Paul either, in my opinion, when need compelled him to work at night as a tentmaker.[52]

Timothy. We owe this to God's goodness. But I would rather go hungry with Peter and Paul, provided the lack of bodily nourishment were compensated by spiritual delights.

Eusebius. Rather let us learn from Paul both to abound and to suffer hunger. When there is lack, let us thank Jesus Christ for supplying us with means of self-control and patience; when there is plenty, we should thank the generosity of him who freely invites us and rouses us to love of him. Enjoying in moderation what the divine goodness has provided, we ought to be mindful of the poor—who by God's will are without that in which we abound—in order that there may be occasion of mutual goodness by each to the other. Since we are granted enough to enable us to relieve brotherly need, we may win God's mercy; and the poor, restored by our generosity, thank God for our good will and commend us to him in their prayers.

And well does this come to mind. Here, boy, tell my wife to send what's left of the roast to our Gudula. She's a neighbor who's pregnant and poor, but blessed in spirit. Her husband, an idle spendthrift, died recently, leaving her nothing but a pack of children.

Timothy. Christ commanded us to give to everyone who asks. If I did that, I'd have to beg myself within a month.

Eusebius. I believe Christ means those who ask for necessities. Those who seek, nay demand, or rather extort, large sums to make Lucullan feasts or—worse yet—to cater to their gluttony and lust, it is charity to refuse. More than that, it's robbery to bestow on those who will use it ill what ought to have relieved the instant distress of our neighbors. Hence those who adorn monasteries or churches at excessive cost,

[51] Acts 9:43, 10:6.

[52] Acts 18:3.

when meanwhile so many of Christ's living temples are in danger of starving, shiver in their nakedness, and are tortured by want of necessities, seem to me almost guilty of a capital crime.[53] When I was in Britain I saw St. Thomas' tomb laden with innumerable precious jewels in addition to other incredible riches.[54] I'd rather have this superfluous wealth spent on the poor than kept for the use of officials who will plunder it all sooner or later. I'd decorate the tomb with branches and flowers; this, I think, would be more pleasing to the saint. In Italy I saw a certain Carthusian monastery, not far from Pavia. In it is a church built of white marble within and without, from top to bottom; and almost everything inside—altars, columns, tombs—is marble. What was the good of pouring out so much money to enable a few lone monks to sing in a marble church which even to them is a burden, not a benefit, because it's constantly overrun with visitors who collect there merely to see that marble church?

There I learned of something still more foolish: that they have a legacy of three thousand ducats a year to spend on building. And some people think it a crime to divert that money, contrary to the testator's intentions, to pious uses. They prefer to pull down what they begin rather than not to build at all. Since these facts are notorious, I thought I should mention them, although our own churches furnish a great many similar examples from time to time. This strikes me as a thirst for glory, not charity. Rich men covet a monument for themselves in churches where formerly there was not room for saints.[55] They take care to have their likenesses carved and painted, with their names and an inscription about their gift added. And with these things they fill up a large part of the church. The time will come, I suppose, when they'll insist on being buried on the very altars.

Someone will ask, "Do you think their liberality should

53 This passage, too, gave offense to the Sorbonne (*Opera Omnia*, Leiden edition, IX, 936C-E).

54 See "A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake."

55 See "The Funeral."

be refused?" By no means, if what they offer is worthy of the temple of God. But if I were a priest or a bishop, I would urge upon those thickheaded courtiers or merchants that if they wanted to have their sins forgiven in God's sight, they should spend their money secretly, for the support of those who really need it. They consider money wasted that is scattered thus, anonymously and in small amounts, to relieve the immediate needs of the poor—no memorial of it might survive for posterity! For my part, I think no money is better spent than that for which Christ himself will be most assuredly our debtor.

Timothy. Don't you think what is given to monasteries well spent?

Eusebius. I'd give them something if I were rich, but I'd give for their need, not their magnificence, and to those in which I perceived a zeal for true religion to flourish.

Timothy. Many think what is given to public beggars is not well spent.

Eusebius. Something should be given to those, too, at times, yet with discrimination. I should think it wise for each city to look after its own, and not to tolerate vagabonds wandering about hither and yon—particularly the able-bodied ones, who, I imagine, need a job rather than a dole.

Timothy. Then to whom do you think we should give chiefly? How much, and to what extent?

Eusebius. That would be very hard to define precisely. In the first place, there ought to be a will to assist everybody. Next, so far as my slender means permit, I give whenever occasion presents itself, especially to those whose poverty and honesty are known to me. And if I haven't the means, I urge others to be generous.

Timothy. But do you permit us to speak freely here in your kingdom?

Eusebius. Oh, yes, more frankly than in your own home.

Timothy. You disapprove of spending too much on churches, and yet you could have built this house for much less.

Eusebius. Well, I think it's in the modest class. Or call it elegant if you prefer; certainly it's not luxurious, unless I'm mistaken. Mendicants build more splendidly. Yet these gardens of mine, such as they are, pay tax to the needy; and every day I economize in something and deny myself and my family in order to be more bountiful toward the poor.

Timothy. If everyone were of your mind, a great many now suffering undeserved poverty would be better off; and on the other hand, there wouldn't be so many of those stout people who deserve to learn the sobriety and restraint that necessity could teach them.

Eusebius. Maybe so, but shouldn't we season this flat dessert with something sweet?

Timothy. We've had more than enough sweets.

Eusebius. But I'll bring out what you won't dislike even if you're full.

Timothy. What's that?

Eusebius. A codex of the Gospels, which, since it's my most splendid possession, I'll fetch to crown the feast. Read, boy, from the place where you stopped.

Boy. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat . . . nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" [56]

Eusebius. Hand me the book. In this passage Jesus Christ seems to me to have said the same thing twice, because in place of what he said first, "will hate," he immediately puts "will despise"; and for "will love," "will hold to": the meaning is the same with the persons changed.

Timothy. I don't quite follow.

Eusebius. Then let's demonstrate it mathematically, if you like. In the earlier part put A for one, B for the other; again, in the latter, put B for the one, A for the other, in re-

[56] Matthew 6:24-25.

verse order. For either he will hate A and love B, or will hold to B and despise A. Isn't it plain that A is twice hated and B twice loved?

Timothy. Very clear.

Eusebius. But this conjunction "or," especially when repeated, indicates a contrary or certainly a different meaning. Otherwise wouldn't it be absurd to say, "Either Peter will defeat me and I'll yield, or I'll yield and Peter will defeat me"?

Timothy. A nice sophism, God help me!

Eusebius. It will seem nice to me, too, in the end, if you solve it for me.

Theophilus. My mind dreams and delivers something, I know not what. If you order me to, I'll bring it forth before you, whatever it is, and you'll be the interpreters or midwives.

Eusebius. Although it's commonly considered unlucky to recall dreams at a feast, and hardly decent to be in labor in the presence of so many men, nevertheless we'll be glad to receive your dream, or, if you prefer, the offspring of your mind.

Theophilus. In this utterance the action rather than the person is shifted, it seems to me. And this expression, "one, and . . . one . . ." is not related to A and B, but each part of the expression refers to either "one." Whichever "one" you choose is now opposed to what is indicated by the other. As if you should say, "Either you will exclude A and admit B, or admit A and exclude B." You observe here that although the person remains, the action is changed, and this is so said of A that it makes no difference if you should say the same of B, in this way: "Either you will exclude B and admit A, or admit B and exclude A."

Eusebius. You've explained the problem to us very acutely indeed, nor could any mathematician have demonstrated it better in the sand.

Sophronius. I'm more puzzled by the part forbidding us to worry about the morrow,[57] since Paul himself worked with his hands to get his living,[58] severely rebuking lazy folk and

[57] Matthew 6:34.

[58] Acts 18:3; II Thessalonians 3:8.

those who are glad to live off others. He warns them to work [59] and tells them manual labor is good for them, because it enables them to help the needy. Isn't the labor by which a poor husband supports his beloved wife and dear children pious and sanctified?

Timothy. In my judgment, that question can be answered in different ways. First, as relates particularly to those times. The Apostles, who traveled far and wide for the sake of preaching the gospel, had to be relieved of the worry of getting a living. They had no time to earn their bread by manual labor, especially when they knew no craft but fishing. Now times have changed, and we all have leisure enough; we're just lazy. A second solution is this: Christ did not forbid labor but anxiety. And by anxiety he meant the common feeling of men who are concerned above all else with making a living; everything else neglected, they attend to this alone, devoted to this single care. The Lord himself virtually declares this when he denies that the same man can serve two masters, since "serving" means "completely devoted to." Therefore he wants the first and foremost care—not the *sole* care—to be that of spreading the gospel. For he says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." [60] He does not say "seek only" but "seek first." But "the morrow" is an intentional exaggeration, I think, for he means the distant future. Those whose hearts are set on this world habitually worry about the future and try to prepare for it.

Eusebius. We accept your interpretation. But what does he mean by saying "Take no thought for your life,[61] what ye shall eat"? [62] The body wears clothing, but the soul doesn't eat.

Timothy. Here he calls the soul life, I think. The soul is endangered if you take away food, but not if you strip off clothing, which is for modesty rather than necessity. If a per-

[59] II Thessalonians 3:11; I Thessalonians 4:11-12.
[60] Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31.
[61] *Animae* (Vulgate).
[62] Matthew 6:25, 31.

son is perforce naked, he doesn't die instantly. But starvation is death for sure.

Eusebius. I don't quite see the connection between this statement and what follows: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" For if life is of great value, we should be the more zealous to preserve it.

Timothy. This argument does not dispel our uncertainty but adds to it.

Eusebius. But you misinterpret Christ's meaning. By this argument he increases our trust in the Father. If the benevolent Father gave freely and of his own accord what is more precious, He will likewise add what is more common. He who gave the soul will not deny food; He who gave the body will add clothing from somewhere. Relying on his kindness, therefore, we have no reason to be distracted by anxiety over minor matters. What remains, then, except to turn our whole care and zeal to the love of heavenly things, using this world as though we used it not; and, utterly rejecting earthly riches, together with Satan and all his wiles, with a whole and fervent heart serve God alone, who will not forsake his children.

But meanwhile nobody is touching the dessert. Surely it's permissible to enjoy this, which is produced for us at home with no trouble at all.

Timothy. Our bodies have had quite enough.

Eusebius. Your minds too, I trust.

Timothy. Our minds have fed even more richly.

Eusebius. Then remove these things, boy, and bring the basin. Let us wash, my friends, in order that, cleansed of any fault we may have committed at this feast, we may sing a hymn to God. I'll finish the one I began from Chrysostom, if you like.

Timothy. Please do.

Eusebius. "Glory to thee, O Lord; glory to thee, O thou holy one; glory to thee, O king. As now thou hast given us meat, fill us with joy and gladness in the Holy Spirit, that we may be found acceptable in thy sight, nor be shamed when thou renderest to each according to his works."

Boy. Amen.

Timothy. A devout and beautiful hymn, without question.

Eusebius. St. Chrysostom does not disdain to interpret it, too.

Timothy. Where?

Eusebius. In his fifty-sixth [63] homily on Matthew.

Timothy. I'll read it without fail this very day. But there's one thing, meantime, I want to learn from you: why do we pray for Christ's glory three times, and by the triple title of "lord," "holy one," and "king"?

Eusebius. Because all glory belongs to him, but especially ought we to praise him by the triple name. First, because by his sacred blood he released us from the devil's tyranny and claimed us as his own; whence we call him lord. Next, because, not content with having freely pardoned all our sins by his spirit, he bestowed his righteousness upon us, that we might seek after holiness. And for this reason we call him holy, because he is the sanctifier of all men. Finally, because from him we hope for the reward of the heavenly kingdom, where he now sits at the right hand of God the Father; hence we call him king. And all this blessedness we owe to his grace, freely granted us: that instead of having the devil as master, or tyrant rather, we have Jesus Christ for lord; instead of the dregs and filth of sin we have innocence and holiness; instead of hell the joys of the heavenly life.

Timothy. A truly reverent thought.

Eusebius. Since now this is the first time I've had you to dinner, I won't send you away without presents, but with ones that are in keeping with our style. Ho there, boy, bring my going-away gifts. Draw lots, or choose for yourselves, it makes no difference. They're all worth about the same—nothing, that is. These aren't the lots of Heliogabalus,[64] by which this man wins a hundred horses and that one as many flies.

63 No. 55 in some editions; see note 13.

64 Roman emperor (A.D. 218-222), infamous for his extravagance and depravity. See *Scriptores Historiae Augustae,* "Antoninus Elagabalus," xxii.

There are four little books, two clocks, a small lamp, and a case with Memphian pens.[65] I think these suit you better than balsam juice or tooth powder or a mirror, if I know you well.

Timothy. They're all so fine that it's hard for us to choose. Distribute them yourself, as you think best; then whatever one gets will be all the more welcome.

Eusebius. This little vellum book contains Solomon's proverbs. It teaches wisdom, and is decorated with gold because gold symbolizes wisdom. This shall be given to our white-haired friend, that, in accordance with evangelical teaching, wisdom be given to him who hath wisdom and he may have abundance.

Timothy. Assuredly I'll endeavor to need it the less.

Eusebius. The clock, imported from far-off Dalmatia (if I may thus praise my own present), will suit Sophronius, for I know how thrifty of time he is, how he won't let any part of that great treasure go without making good use of it.

Sophronius. No, no; you're advising a lazy man to be diligent.

Eusebius. This little book has Matthew's Gospel on vellum: worthy of a jeweled cover were it not that no bookcase or cover is dearer to it than a man's heart. This then for you, learned Theophilus, to make you more like your name.

Theophilus. I'll try to see that you won't regret your gift.

Eusebius. Here are Paul's Epistles, which you, Eulalius, who are always quoting Paul, like to carry about with you. You wouldn't have him in your mouth unless he were in your heart. After this he'll be more readily in your hands and eyes too.

Eulalius. This is to give counsel, not a gift. No gift is more precious than good counsel.

Eusebius. The little oil lamp will suit Chrysoglottus, an insatiable reader and, as Tully[66] says, a mighty devourer of books.

65 Egyptian, i.e., reed, pens. Cf. Martial, xiv, 38.

66 *De Finibus,* III, ii, 7.

Chrysoglottus. I thank you twice: first, for an uncommonly nice present; secondly, for admonishing a sleepy fellow to be alert.

Eusebius. The pen case goes by rights to Theodidactus, a most graceful and prolific writer; and I deem these pens to be most fortunate by which the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ will be celebrated, especially by so talented a writer.

Theodidactus. Would that you could furnish the inspiration as you do the instruments!

Eusebius. This codex contains some short works of Plutarch, the *Moralia,* selected and skillfully copied by someone expert in Greek writing. So much piety do I find in them that I think it marvelous such Christian-like notions could have come into a pagan mind. This will be presented to Uranius, a young Hellenist. A clock remains. That's for our Nephalius, who's very frugal of time.

Nephalius. We thank you, not only for your little presents but also for the testimonials. For this is not so much distributing gifts as compliments.

Eusebius. My thanks to you, rather, on two counts: first, for being so good about my simple style of living; secondly, for refreshing my mind with your conversation, which was equally learned and devout. I'll send you away without knowing what sort of time you've had, but undoubtedly I'll take leave of you a better and wiser man myself. I know pipes or jesters aren't to your taste; much less, dice. So, if you like, let's beguile a brief hour by seeing the other wonders of my palace.

Timothy. We were just about to beg that of you.

Eusebius. No need to beg one who promises sincerely. I suppose you've already seen enough of this summer courtyard. It has a triple view, and whichever way you look you're confronted by the most delightful verdure of gardens. With the sliding windows you may, if you like, shut out the weather, should clouds or winds make it a bit disagreeable; and if the heat annoys, you may shut out the sun by closing the thick shutters from the outside and the thin ones from inside. When

I lunch here, I seem to eat in a garden, not a house. For the walls, too, have flowers mingled with their green, and there are rather good pictures. Here Christ celebrates the Last Supper with his chosen disciples. Here Herod observes his birthday with a fatal feast. Here Dives of the Gospel story, shortly to go down to hell, dines sumptuously; Lazarus, soon to be received into Abraham's bosom, is driven from the gates.

Timothy. I don't quite recognize this story.

Eusebius. Cleopatra is trying to outdo Anthony in voluptuousness. She's already swallowed a pearl, and puts out her hand to take another one.[67] Here the Lapithae [68] are fighting. Here Alexander the Great pierces Clitus with a spear.[69] These examples warn us to be temperate at feasts, and deter us from drunkenness and sensuality. Now let's go into the library, which is furnished with choice if not numerous books.

Timothy. Clearly this place is hallowed, so radiant is everything.

Eusebius. Here you see the main part of my wealth. For on the table you saw nothing but glass and pewter. There isn't a silver vessel in the entire house; just one gilded cup, which I treasure out of affection for the person who gave it to me. This hanging globe puts the whole world before your eyes. Here on the walls every region is painted in a larger space. On the other walls you see pictures of famous teachers. To paint them all would have been an endless task. Christ, seated on the mountain with his hand outstretched, has the foremost place. The Father appears above his head, saying "Hear ye him." With spreading wings the Holy Spirit enfolds him in dazzling light.

Timothy. A work worthy of Apelles, so help me.

Eusebius. Adjoining the library is a study, narrow but neat. When the board's removed you see a small hearth to use if you're cold. In summer it seems a solid wall.

67 See Pliny, *Natural History,* IX, lviii, 119-121.

68 A Thessalian people who fought against the Centaurs (Ovid, *Met.,* xii, 210ff.).

69 Plutarch, *Alexander,* l-li.

Timothy. To me everything here seems precious. And there's a delightful scent.

Eusebius. I try very hard to keep the house shining and fragrant. To do both is not expensive. The library has its own balcony, overlooking the garden; connected with it is a chapel.

Timothy. A place fit for deity.

Eusebius. Now let's go on to those three galleries above the ones you saw, the ones looking out on the kitchen garden. These upper ones have a view on each side, but through windows that can be closed—especially in these walls that do not look on the inner garden—to make the house safer. Here on the left, because there is more light and the wall has fewer windows, is painted in order the entire life of Jesus as related by the four Evangelists, up to the sending forth of the Holy Spirit and the first preaching of the Apostles from Acts. Place names are added, too, that the spectator may read by which water or on which mountain the event took place; also captions summarizing the whole story, e.g., Jesus' words, "I will: be thou clean." On the opposite side are corresponding figures and prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly from the Prophets and Psalms, which contain nothing other than the life of Christ and the Apostles, told in a different manner. Here I stroll sometimes, conversing with myself and meditating upon that inexpressible purpose of God by which he willed to restore the human race through his son. Sometimes my wife, or some friend pleased by sacred subjects, keeps me company.

Timothy. Who could be bored in this house?

Eusebius. No one who has learned to live with himself. Along the top edge of the paintings are added, as a kind of border, the heads of the popes with their names; opposite, the heads of the Caesars, to help one remember history. In each corner of the wings is a small bedchamber where one can rest and from which one can see the orchard and my little birds. Here in the farthest corner of the meadow you see another small building, where we sometimes dine in summer, and

where anyone of the family who is stricken with a contagious disease is cared for.

Timothy. Some people deny that such diseases are to be shunned.

Eusebius. Then why do they shun a pit or poison? Or do they fear this less because they don't see it? Neither do we see the venom of a basilisk, which darts from his eyes. When the situation absolutely requires, I wouldn't hesitate to risk my life. To risk it without reason is reckless folly; to endanger the lives of others is cruelty.

There are some other things, too, that are worth seeing. I'll ask my wife to show them to you. Stay here the whole day, and consider this house your own. Feast your eyes, feast your minds. For I have business elsewhere; I must ride to some neighboring villages.

Timothy. Money matters?

Eusebius. I wouldn't leave such friends for the sake of money.

Timothy. Perhaps there's hunting somewhere.

Eusebius. Hunting, yes, but I'm hunting something other than boars and stags.

Timothy. What, then?

Eusebius. I'll tell you. In one village a certain friend lies critically ill. The doctor fears for his body; I fear for his soul, rather. Since, in my opinion, he is scarcely prepared to depart as befits a Christian, I'm going to be at hand with good counsel, so that he may be helped whether he dies or recovers. In another village a serious difference has arisen between two men; not bad men, certainly, but stubborn ones. If the quarrel should become sharper, I fear it would draw many others into a feud. I'll try my best to bring them to good terms again, for I have bonds of long standing with both. These are my quarry. If my hunting goes as I wish, we'll have a victory celebration here without delay.

Timothy. Good hunting! Our prayer is that Christ, not Delia, may favor you.

Eusebius. I'd rather have this prize than inherit two thousand ducats.

Timothy. Will you return soon?

Eusebius. Not until I've tried everything. Hence I can't name a definite time. Meanwhile enjoy yourselves with my things as with your own, and farewell.

Timothy. May the Lord Jesus prosper your going and coming!